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Plant Chat

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New Big Bluestem Release

Bounty Germplasm big bluestem is a newly released grass selection from the Bismarck Plant Materials Center. It is recommended for conservation use in native plantings throughout the Northern Great Plains and Upper Midwest. Bounty Germplasm big bluestem (*Andropogon gerardii* Vitman) is a selected class pre-varietal release developed from an original seed composite from 49 counties in Minnesota and eastern South Dakota. It provides considerable species diversity to enhance long-term stability and broaden the area of adaptation. Its many conservation uses include: prairie and ecological revegetation, livestock forage on pasture and hayland, wildlife habitat, and native landscaping.

Bounty Germplasm big bluestem seed production field at the PMC

Productive and palatable later in the grazing season, big bluestem provides quality forage during mid to late summer when predominant cool-season grasses become dormant and lose quality, making it a good fit for livestock grazing systems.

Bounty Germplasm big bluestem is a leafy, fine-stemmed, early-maturing selection that ranks high in protein and feed value when compared to other big bluestem varieties adapted to this area. Bounty Germplasm big bluestem is expected to perform well as a high quality, native warm-season grass throughout this region.

Foundation seed is currently available from the Bismarck Plant Materials Center, and certified seed should be available (after the 2013 harvest) through the Crop Improvement Associations in Minnesota and the Dakotas.

Requests for Plant Materials

Plants and seed for 2013 field and demonstration plantings and conservation field trials are still available from the Bismarck Plant Materials Center. Field offices should submit a completed NRCS-ECS-9 “Planting Plan for Field, Special and Increase Plantings” to their area plant materials contact or to the Plant Materials Specialist or PMC by November 15, 2012.

Meyer spruce and Mongolian pine seedlings are being offered for field plantings, and ‘Manifest’ intermediate wheatgrass seed is available for conservation field trials. Transplant cones of sweetgrass and white sage will again be available on a limited basis for cultural and demonstration purposes. The PMC will also consider other requests for seed or transplants of other species for cultural and demonstration plantings. Specific information on each available species can be found in the previous edition of Plant Chat (Summer 2012) or by contacting the Plant Materials Specialist or Plant Materials Center.

Recent Drought May Impact Seed Availability for 2013

Many growers of common and certified grass seed experienced mild to severe drought conditions during the 2012 growing season. It appears drought was more extreme in the southern part of our region, where yields were cut drastically. Some growers in southern South Dakota reported 90% loss in production for certain species. Before harvest, it was virtually impossible to find available local supplies of species like blue grama seed. The reduced harvest may limit available supplies of some species. Remember to utilize the PMC Conservation Seed/Plant Vendors List and/or Prairie Landscaping Seed/Plant Vendors List to help locate available supplies of seed or plants for the 2013 growing season. The PMC continues to maintain the list of Prices for Foundation and Select Class Seed that is available from the Bismarck PMC for certified seed production.

List of Seed and Plant Vendors

The Bismarck PMC updates and makes available various vendors lists (noted above). If you are aware of reputable seed and plant vendors who are not currently listed, please let us know so they can be included. If existing information needs editing, please inform the PMC so it can be corrected.

State Plant Materials Committee Meetings Scheduled

The annual state committee meetings are currently scheduled for:

North Dakota	December 5, 2012
Minnesota	December 12, 2012
South Dakota	January 9, 2013

If you have local input that you would like us to consider for your state meeting, please contact your ARC, SRC, or Plant Materials Specialist.

Two Conifer Species Available for Field Plantings (25 trees for 5 sites in each of MN, SD, ND)

Mongolian Scotch pine comes from Mongolia as the name implies. Many currently available Scotch pine come from European seed sources. In 20 years of trials at

off-center evaluation sites, this species has shown exceptional growth, good vigor, and dense compact foliage compared to other Scotch pines. As with all Scotch pine, this source exhibits a yellowish fall color as a juvenile and distinctive orange bark as it matures. Field plantings that include common Scotch pine for comparison are preferred. To ease follow-up, the two species should not be comingled.

Mongolian Scotch pine

To quote Towner State Nursery, "Meyer spruce is native to China and is similar in appearance to Colorado blue spruce. It is a hardy tree with dense, bluish-green needles. Meyer spruce has good form and grows on a wide variety of soils. It grows slowly the first few years after planting, but once established, the growth rate is similar to blue spruce. Meyer is increasing in popularity in the eastern United States because it appears to be more disease resistant than blue spruce." Field plantings that include Colorado blue spruce for comparison are preferred. To ease follow-up, the two species should not be comingled.

Meyer spruce

'Manifest' Intermediate Wheatgrass Available for Conservation Field Trials (50 pounds/trial, five sites requested)

Manifest is an intermediate wheatgrass that has exhibited consistent high forage yields. Its increased tillering ability in comparison with other intermediate wheatgrass varieties provides improved grazing persistence over a wide geographical area. As with other intermediate wheatgrass varieties, it is listed as moderately tolerant to saline soils.

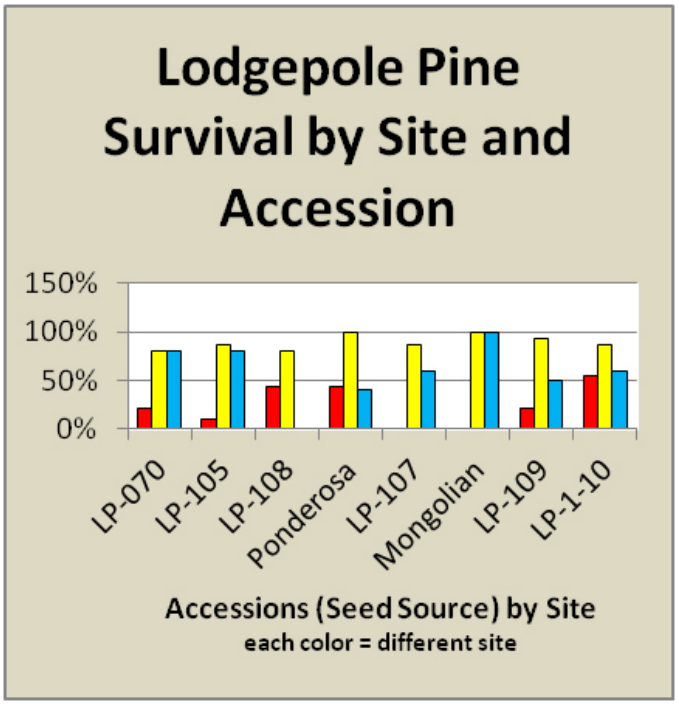
Conservation field trials of Manifest serve to further evaluate and promote it for pasture and hayland use.

When planning a conservation field trial of Manifest, consider comparing it with a different variety of intermediate/pubescent wheatgrass. It can be planted in a field by itself or as a plot within another intermediate wheatgrass seeding. The location of the Manifest seeding should be adequately marked for future evaluation.

If you know of a producer in your county scheduled to complete a pasture or hayland planting this spring and are interested in comparing Manifest, submit a NRCS-ECS-9 "Planting Plan for Field, Special and Increase Plantings" to your plant materials contact in your state or send to the Plant Materials Specialist.

Lodgepole Pine Update

Seedlings of six different lodgepole pine seed sources were planted at two location in North Dakota and one location in South Dakota to determine the suitability of this species for the Dakotas. Seed was collected from the "better" trees of a lodgepole pine provenance test at the ARS station, Mandan, North Dakota. Seed sources ranged from Colorado to Montana to British Columbia. Following are preliminary conclustions after five years. Lodgepole pine appears to be another tall tree species suitable for the western Dakotas on loam to fine sandy loam soils. It does not grow well on heavy textured soils nor soils that are saturated. Weed control is critical for survival. Fabric squares (3-foot x 3-foot) for weed control installed on clean planting sites did not appear adequate. Dense bromegrass sod growing along the edges and out of the openings of 6-foot wide fabric strips also appeared to reduce survival and growth. These studies are only preliminary, but they support existing knowledge on weed control and hint at another tall tree for windbreaks in the Dakotas. The studies will continue. Lodgepole pine seedlings are anticipated for 2014 field plantings in Minnesota, South Dakota, and North Dakota.



Staff Change

Janet Caolo-Tanski, Biological Science Technician at the PMC, accepted a soil conservationist position in the Mandan Field Office in August. Mike Bellon was selected to fill the vacant Biological Science Technician position and started at the PMC in September. We wish Janet well in her new position and welcome Mike back to the PMC!